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FIELD BRANCH

MR. EGG PRODUCER: WATCH THOSE REPORTS

Statistical barometers aren't quite as precise as the instrument the weatherman uses, but every farmer who has an opportunity to operate on a flexible basis ought, nevertheless, to watch them.

For the egg producer, the critical statistical reports in the next few

months—from which the forthcoming egg price climate can be judged—will be the Crop Reporting Board's annual report on farmers' intentions to buy chicks and the Board's hatchery production reports.

These reports are important because they foretell, to a considerable degree,



Reports—Continued

the size of the laying flock that will be on hand next fall, and for a year thereafter. The more chickens we have then, the more eggs there will be, and in general, the more eggs there are, the less favorable producers' prices will be.

Right now economic indicators tell us that more chickens will be raised in 1961 for laying flock replacement than the record low (since figures were started in 1909) of 339 million in 1960. Most observers feel that the increase will be larger than would serve the best interests of the poultry industry. They also feel that the increase will bring egg prices down below 1960 levels by next fall, if not sooner.

But economic indicators aren't sure fire. One reason they aren't is because farmers are changing their reactions to those indicators.

In the past whenever the egg-feed price ratio turned upward before and during the hatching season, the number of chickens raised also turned upward, and by a proportionate amount. (See the chart on the next page.)

But now that relationship is less precise. This means that, among other

things, the individual farmer has been made more conservative by an awareness that he'd better consider what production changes will be made by the other fellow. The farmer knows now that in planning his own production changes he can no longer simply assume that the rest of the industry will stand still.

In checking what the rest of the industry will do—as contrasted to merely judging how strong is the attraction for them to change the volume of production—we can look beyond an economic indicator such as the egg-feed price ratio. (In case you've forgotten, the egg-feed price ratio tells us how many pounds of ration it takes to equal the value of 1 dozen eggs.)

After February 10 we can look instead at the Crop Reporting Board's annual survey of farmers' intentions to buy chicks. These intentions are published every year in the February crop report.

If that report shows that farmers intend to increase their chick purchases by more than about 8 or 10 percent from last year, take heed! A 10-per-

CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

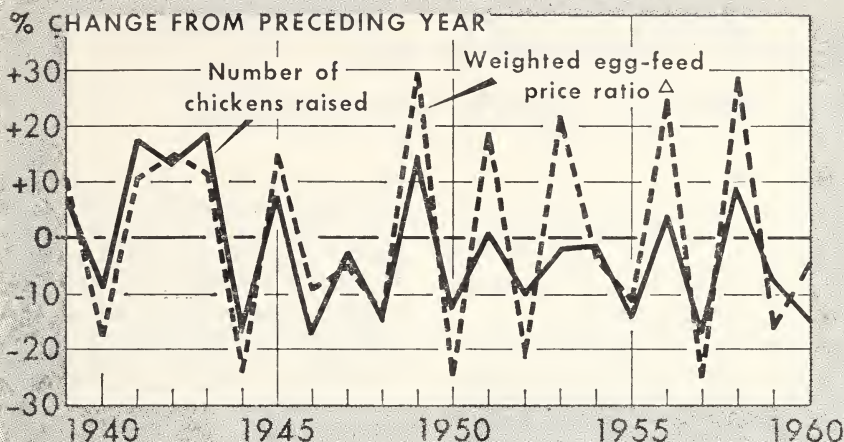
Year	Egg-Feed Price Ratio ¹	Intentions To Buy Chicks	Chickens Raised
1955	-11%	-18%	-14%
1956	+25%	+3%	+4%
1957	-23%	-9%	-17%
1958	+28%	+6%	+9%
1959	-20%	-1%	-7%
1960	-5%	-9%	-15%
1961	+15% ²	?	?

¹ Weighted "springtime" average. ² Projection.

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EGG-FEED PRICE RATIO AND CHICKENS RAISED



Δ WEIGHTED AS FOLLOWS: PRECEDING NOV., 1; PRECEDING DEC., 2; JAN., 3; FEB., 4; MAR., 5; APR., 3; MAY, 1
1959 PRELIMINARY

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEC 6441-50 (10) AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

cent increase would build up the laying flock to a higher level next fall than it was during late 1960. It would probably have a depressing effect on egg prices by that time and probably earlier.

In past years, farmers' statements about their intentions to buy chicks have provided a strong hint of their later actions. The table on page 2 compares their intentions for the past 6 years with the number of chickens raised and the "springtime" egg-feed price ratio.

Of course farmers can still change their minds after the intentions report comes out. So the poultryman should play it safe and also watch the Crop Reporting Board's monthly hatchery reports. These reports—generally issued on the 16th or 17th of the month—tell us whether the hatch is running above or below a year earlier, and by how much.

February through May are the most important months for the hatching of replacement chicks—over 70 per-

cent of the hatch has occurred in those months in recent years. But hatchery reports are also issued in the off-season months. The December report says that 20 percent more replacement chicks were hatched in November than in November 1959. *The number of eggs in incubators on December 1 was 43 percent above a year earlier.*

Remember, keep an eye on those reports. If you're not getting the intentions report and the hatchery reports, drop your State statistician a card. He'll be glad to send them to you.

These reports provide data for the *Poultry and Egg Situation*—a bi-monthly publication that analyzes and interprets all current poultry statistics. (Your State statistician can also send you this report.)

After looking at the reports you may want to alter your plans. If you do want to, but you can't, you'll at least have an idea of what to expect in the future.

Edward Karpoff
Agricultural Economics Division, AMS



SLIGHT CHANGES IN RYE AND WINTER WHEAT ACREAGES

Winter Wheat

This past fall, farmers seeded 43.9 million acres of winter wheat, slightly more than they did in the fall of 1959, but seedings were nearly a tenth smaller than the 1950-59 average.

Conditions as of December 1 point to a winter wheat crop of 1,034 million bushels. A crop this size would be 7 percent smaller than the 1960 crop, but nearly 25 percent larger than average. It would also be the fifth largest crop of record.

Indications point to a yield of 23.6 bushels per seeded acre. This is below the 1960 yield of 25.9 bushels, but well above the 1950-59 yield of 17.6 bushels.

The final outturn of the crop will be largely influenced by weather between December 1 and harvest, as well as damage from insects and disease. The production forecast assumes that these factors will approximate the normal for the remainder of the crop season.

Current conditions indicate that 6.6 percent of the acreage seeded for all purposes will not be harvested for grain. In 1960, 6.1 percent was not harvested.

The crop was planted under acreage allotment and marketing quotas. The all wheat national allotment is 55 million acres, the same as last year.

Spring Wheat

If it is assumed that farmers seed about the same acreage to spring wheat

as they did last year (12.4 million acres) and that yields equal the average of the last 3 years (19.3 bushels per acre), a spring crop of about 240 million bushels would be produced.

Adding this to the indicated winter wheat crop, a total wheat production of nearly 1,275 million bushels would be indicated. This would be 7 percent below the 1960 crop, but 16 percent above average.

A crop of this size would undoubtedly be in excess of domestic disappearance and exports, causing the carryover July 1, 1962, to increase.

Rye

Farmers seeded 4.2 million acres of rye for all purposes last fall. This acreage was only slightly smaller than the 1959 acreage, but 3 percent above the 1950-59 average.

The Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Washington accounted for one-third of the seedings, about the same as they did last year. An estimated 411,000 acres were seeded in North Dakota, 25 percent more than last year. South Dakota reduced acreage 8 percent.

The condition of rye on December 1 reflected generally good growing conditions. At 87 percent, it was 1 point above December 1, 1959, and 4 points above the average.

Robert Post
Agricultural Economics Division, AMS



OUTLOOK

Prices of farm products, which in recent years have declined during heavy fall marketings, rose 3 percent from August to December. The Index of Prices Received by Farmers was up 1 point from November to December and in mid-December was 5 percent above 1959.



Dairy

A milk production record may be set in 1961, exceeding the 1957 high of close to 126 billion pounds. A major reason: The price of beef cattle, relative to milk prices, has been declining. Also, ample supplies of feed should be available. Mid-November prices to farmers for milk and butterfat were a shade higher than a year earlier.

Hogs

Hog slaughter should run lower this winter than a year ago with prices probably higher. (See the story on page 7.)



Tobacco

Cigarette production and consumption set new records in 1960—further increases are expected in 1961. Cigarette consumption was about 487 bil-

lion, almost 4 percent above 1959 and 8 percent above 1958.

Eggs

Year-end egg prices to farmers are higher than in 1959. Mid-December egg prices—44.1 cents per dozen, U.S. average—although 1½ cents below the year's high registered in November were the highest for the month since 1957. These prices prompted poultrymen to increase their chick orders with the result that eggs in incubators on December 1 were 43 percent above a year earlier.

Broilers

Broiler prices in early December were below 1959. Broiler production will be higher in early 1961 than it was in early 1960.



Feed

Feed grain prices dipped to the lowest level since 1942-43 in November 1960. Corn prices fell sharply to an 18-year low as they reflected heavy marketings of the 1960 record crop. Feed grain prices advanced 4 percent from November to December, regaining part of the drop from October to November.

Soybeans

Prices averaged \$1.95 a bushel during harvest, 10 cents above the support price, and at about the same level as a year earlier. The main reasons for this were a strong export and crusher demand and larger withholdings by farm-



OUTLOOK

Continued . . .

ers. The 1960-61 soybean supply, at 582 million bushels, is slightly below the record of the past 2 years. Crushings this year may total 400 million bushels, exports around 140 million. If seed and feed requirements continue the same as in recent years, carryover stocks on October 1, 1961, may be about 10 million bushels—about half as much as in 1960.



Vegetables

Prices of fresh vegetables may be somewhat below last winter, when most tender vegetables were in short supply and priced high. Barring severe weather damage in Florida, production of tender vegetables, such as sweet corn and tomatoes, is likely to be larger than last year, with carrots probably substantially smaller. With smaller overall supplies of canned items and generally higher processing and distribution costs, prices of most processed vegetables should average moderately higher than a year earlier.



Cotton

The 1960 cotton crop of 14.3 million running bales was about 200,000 bales lower than that of 1959. Harvested acreage increased but yield per acre was down. With the starting carryover also down from 1959, total cotton supplies of about 22.1 million bales for 1960-61 are 1.5 million bales below 1959-60.

And with disappearance probably at about 15 million, carryover next August should be around 7 million—about $\frac{1}{2}$ million bales below 1960 and the smallest since 1953. Cotton exports for the entire season probably will be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million bales lower than the high of a year earlier.



Cattle

Market supplies of cattle this winter will be a little larger than last year with grass cattle providing much of the increase. Prices are likely to continue close to current levels.

Citrus Fruit

Although citrus prices have declined as marketings increased, prices in early December were above a year earlier and should remain above 1960 levels this winter.



Sheep

Lamb marketing in the next few months are likely to be above a year earlier though declining seasonally, but some seasonal uptrend in lamb prices is expected.

Wheat

Cash prices for wheat in mid-December were near the high for the season. (See the story on page 4.)

Turkeys

Turkey prices late in the year were above the same period in 1959. Production of turkeys in early 1961 will be higher than a year earlier.

INTENTIONS POINT TO A LARGER SPRING PIG CROP

Reports based on farmers' intentions indicate 7.1 million sows to farrow in the spring of 1961 (December 1960–May 1961). This is 4 percent more than in the spring of 1960, but 12 percent less than in the spring of 1959. If these intentions materialize, and the number of pigs per litter should equal the 10-year average, with an allowance for trend, the 1961 spring pig crop would be 49.5 million head—5 percent above the 1960 spring pig crop.

The 1960 pig crop totaled 88.7 million head, a decrease of 11 percent from 1959. For the 10-year period (1949–58) the yearly pig crop averaged 91.1 million head. The 1960 spring pig crop totaled 47.1 million head, and the fall pig crop 41.6 million head.

The 1960 spring pig crop (December 1959 through May 1960) at 47.1 million pigs was 17 percent below 1959. A total of 6.8 million sows farrowed in the spring of 1960, 15 percent fewer than a year earlier. Pigs saved per litter averaged 6.96, compared with 7.08 pigs saved per litter in the spring of 1959.

The number of sows farrowing in the fall of 1960 (June through November) at 5.9 million head, was 3 percent less than in the fall of 1959, but 10 percent above average.

Pigs Saved

The number of pigs saved during the fall of 1960 is estimated at 41.6 million head. This is 3 percent less than the 1959 fall crop but 14 percent above the 1949–58 fall average.

Pigs saved per litter averaged 7.02 in the fall of 1960, compared with 6.98 in the fall of 1959. The average litter size was reported down in the North Atlantic States and unchanged in the West North Central, but increased in all other regions.

Selected States

The number of sows intended to farrow in 10 Corn Belt States in the spring of 1961 is 6 percent more than a year earlier. These 10 States—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas—accounted for about three-fourths of our 1960 spring pig crop.

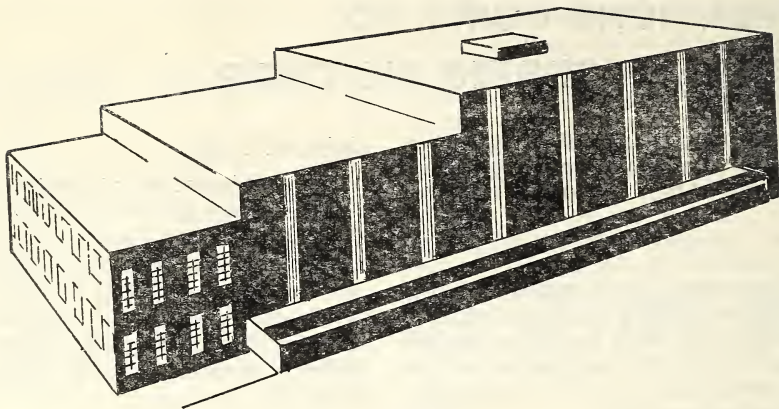
The December 1 survey indicated more farrowings in both the winter (December–February) and spring (March–May) quarters. The numbers of sows expected to farrow during December, January, and February at 1.8 million head is 8 percent more than during this period a year earlier. In September, farmers in these 10 States planned to increase farrowings about 4 percent during the winter months (December, January, and February).

In these States the number of sows farrowed in the fall of 1960 totaled 4.4 million head, 1 percent less than in the fall of 1959. Sows farrowed during June, July, and August totaled 2.3 million head or 7 percent less in 1959. The number farrowed during September, October, and November totaled 2.1 million head, 5 percent more than for the same quarter in 1959.

The number of all hogs and pigs on farms December 1 in the 10 Corn Belt States for which data are available totaled 46.9 million head, 3 percent less than the 48.4 million on hand a year earlier. The number six months old and over declined 7 percent, and the number from three to six months old declined 7 percent, but the number under 3 months increased 7 percent.

F. W. Griffith
Agricultural Estimates Division, AMS





REFRIGERATED WAREHOUSE CAPACITY HAS BEEN EXPANDING

Close your eyes. Can you picture 30 million refrigerators? If you can, you've got a rough idea of the increase in the capacity of our refrigerated warehouses in the past 10 years.

Capacity increased 241 million cubic feet or 34 percent from 1949 to 1959—closely following the sharp increase in our agricultural production. Refrigerated warehouses store meats, eggs, butter, cheese, fruits, vegetables, and many other farm products.

In the decade, a number of changes have occurred in the industry. Here are some of them:

- A very definite shift has occurred from cooler to freezer space, except in apple houses. We consider space that is artificially cooled from 0° F. to 50° F. as cooler space; that which is cooled to 0° F. and below, as freezer space. Both types are usually available in a warehouse.

- In general, more usable space is obtained from each cubic foot of cooler space than of freezer space. "Usable" space is the area that can be used for storing commodities. "Gross" space is the total area of a warehouse.

- The rate of increase of freezer space in private and semiprivate general warehouses during the past 10 years was double that in public general warehouses. The public warehouse operator stores commodities for

others. The private operator conducts the warehousing operation as a part of his main business as a producer, processor, or distributor. He does not store commodities for others. The semiprivate operator uses part of his space for his commodities and the other part for the commodities of others.

- In 1959 public general warehouses had nearly twice as much freezer space as cooler space, and their freezer capacity nearly doubled in the last decade.

- The total gross capacity increase in public general warehouses was about one-sixth larger than the increase in private and semiprivate general warehouses and apple houses combined.

- Cooler space predominates in apple houses. Apple houses—public, private, or semiprivate—are used mainly or exclusively to store apples or pears.

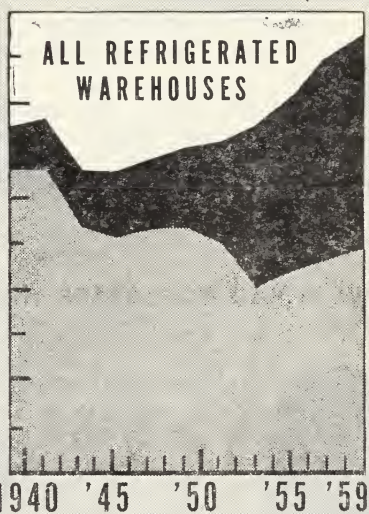
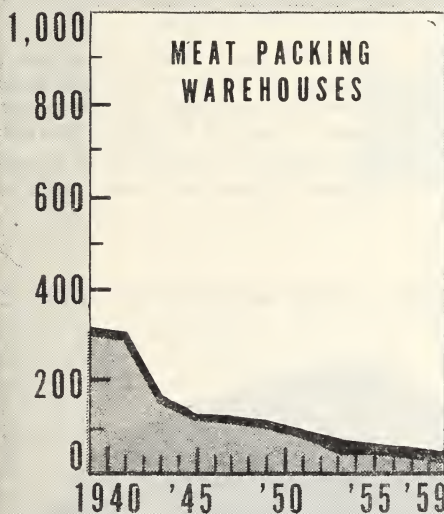
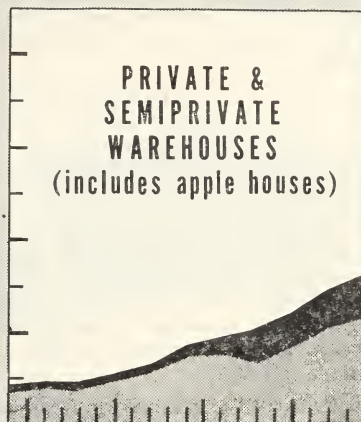
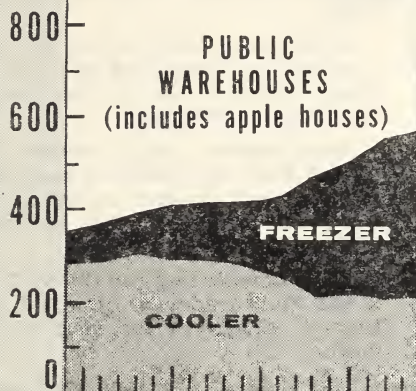
- Meat-packing warehouse capacity has declined since 1949. In reporting refrigerated capacity in meat-packing plants we consider only the space used for storing products.

- Of every 9 cubic feet of refrigerated warehouse space in the United States, 5 cubic feet are operated by public general warehouses.

Kenneth D. Ackers
Agricultural Estimates Division, AMS

GROSS REFRIGERATED SPACE

MIL. CU. FT.



U.S. GRADES FOR HOGS HELP PRODUCERS MEET CONSUMERS' DEMAND

Today consumers demand high-quality, lean pork. Hog producers can use U.S. grades for hogs and pork carcasses to meet this demand.

These grades help measure and identify differences in hogs and pork carcasses. They are designed so that a hog which grades U.S. No. 1 will produce a U.S. No. 1 carcass.

Since these Federal grades are based on published standards available to all, they provide a common language for use between buyers and sellers throughout the Nation.

The grades are also used by the Federal-State market news service as the basis for reporting hog prices, supplies, and demand. This makes it possible to make meaningful comparisons between markets anywhere in the country.

Basically, U.S. grades for hogs and pork carcasses provide a measure of the differences in (1) yield of cuts and (2) quality of the meat.

There are five Federal grades: U.S. No. 1, U.S. No. 2, U.S. No. 3, Medium, and Cull.

Hogs with enough finish to produce pork of acceptable quality—tender, juicy, and flavorful—are included in the No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 grades. Al-

though similar in quality, these grades differ widely in yield of cuts.

The U.S. No. 1 grade goes to the hog with the minimum finish necessary to produce good quality meat. This hog will produce a maximum yield of the lean, high-quality pork consumers desire.

Overfinished hogs, which will produce less lean meat and more fat, are graded No. 2 or No. 3, depending on the degree of overfinish.

Underfinished hogs, though they yield a high percentage of lean meat, produce pork of low quality. They will grade Medium or Cull, depending on the degree of underfinish.

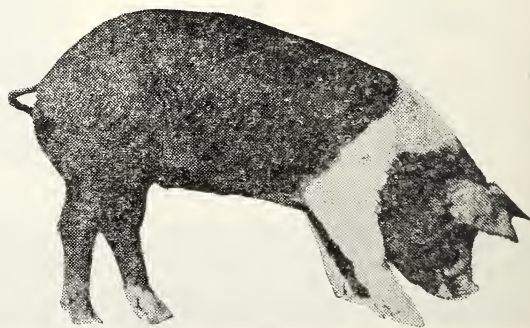
The difference between the No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 grades for hogs and pork, then, is chiefly in the yield of lean meat.

The yield of the four lean cuts—hams, loins, picnics, and Boston butts—is particularly important. These four cuts account for nearly two-thirds of the value of the carcass.

The difference from one grade to another in the yield of these cuts is approximately 3 percent. This is enough to mean a decided difference in value.

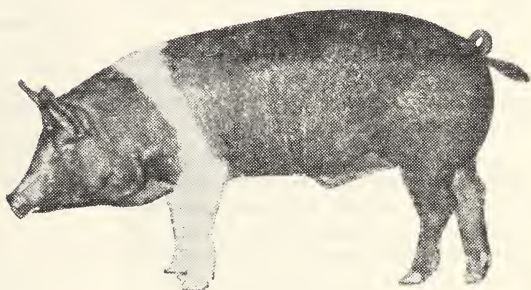
For example, on the basis of average wholesale prices for pork cuts at

HOW WOULD YOU GRADE THIS HOG? (FOR ANSWER SEE PAGE 12)

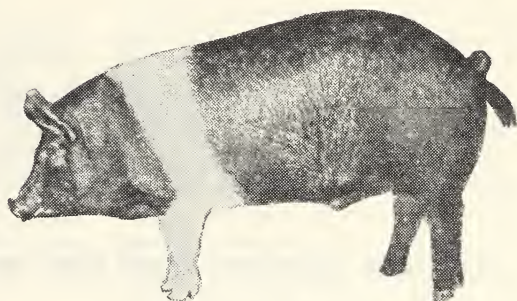




U.S. No. 1



U.S. No. 2



U.S. No. 3

Chicago during the year ended June 30, 1960, a U.S. No. 1 barrow or gilt was worth 60 cents more per hundred-weight than a U.S. No. 2 of the same weight and dressing percentage.

How can you determine the grade of hogs or pork carcasses? Determining the grade, really, means estimating the yield of cuts and the quality of the meat—it has to be done on the basis of factors which have been found to have an effect on yield and meat quality.

These factors include thickness of back fat, thickness of muscling, distri-

bution of finish, and indications of quality.

The best single indicator of grade is back fat thickness in relation to the size of the animal or the carcass.

As an example, for a 220-pound hog an average back fat thickness of between 1.3 and 1.6 inches indicates U.S. No. 1. An average thickness of from 1.6 to 1.9 inches indicates U.S. No. 2; 1.9 inches or more, U.S. No. 3; 1.0 to 1.3 inches, Medium; and less than 1 inch, Cull.

Back fat thickness is an important factor in grading, but the primary ob-

Grades—Continued

jective is to reflect differences in cutting yields—not just differences in fatness. For a more accurate estimate of yields, other factors must be considered along with back fat thickness, especially when this measurement is near the limits of a grade.

Thickness of muscling can be a deciding factor. For example, if two hogs were similar in weight and each had an average back fat thickness of 1.5 to 1.6 inches, one might have thick muscling and grade U.S. No. 1, while the other, if it had thin muscling, would grade U.S. No. 2.

Fat distribution must be considered in grading when the back fat measurements obviously are not representative of the rest of the carcass.

Quality of meat must be considered in drawing the line between the minimum finish which indicates the No. 1 grade and the underfinish which indicates the lower quality of the Medium

and Cull grades. Fat thickness is the best guide to meat quality in grading live hogs, but in grading carcasses the firmness, belly thickness, and interior fats are considered along with back fat thickness as indications of quality.

The use of grades has increased with the move toward marketing hogs on their merits. Knowing the grades—and using them—can help producers meet today's demand for high-quality, lean pork.

Answer to Question on Page 10

If you said the hog on page 10 graded Medium, you're absolutely correct. If you weren't sure, and you'd like to know more about U.S. Grades for hogs, drop us a card and we'll send you more information. Just ask for the publication, *How Do Your Hogs Grade?* Our address: The Agricultural Situation, Marketing Information Division, AMS, USDA, Washington 25, D.C.

C. Lowell Strong
Livestock Division, AMS



USDA'S SPRING ACREAGE MARKETING GUIDES

USDA's acreage marketing guides recommend a 4-percent increase in acreage for 1961-crop spring vegetables for fresh use, and a 6-percent increase in 1961 spring melon acreage.

The guides cover 17 major spring vegetables and 2 spring melon crops that will be marketed in fresh form, principally during April, May, and June 1961.

The guides are designed to help producers reduce their marketing problems. By using it growers can appraise markets for their commodities and develop a planned, realistic planting and production schedule.

Based on the latest information, the guides show the market potential for the crops. They also indicate the acreage needed to produce crops in balance with market requirements.

A planting guide for each commodity is presented in terms of a percentage change in acreage from the preceding year's acreage. The producer can apply the change to his own operation.

Publication

If you want a free copy of the guides see your county agent or drop us a card. Our address: Agricultural Situation, Marketing Information Division, AMS, USDA, Washington 25, D.C.

THE 1960 CROP YEAR WAS A RECORD-BREAKER

A year ago—in the January issue of *Agricultural Situation*—we told you how the 1959 crop year came out. The story ended by saying, "It will be interesting to see what 1960 holds for us."

Now the 1960 crop season is over. And thanks to the crop reporters throughout the Nation, we're able to tell you what happened.

We summed up the season in the report we issued at 3 p.m., Friday, December 16. That week a deep snow in Washington snarled traffic and slowed life to a snail's pace. Some people who read about the snow wondered if we'd release the report as scheduled. A Chicago man wrote, "Will the report come out as planned?"

Well, it did. As a matter of fact, in the history of the crop reporting service only one or two reports have been delayed—due to defects in the clocks.

Here's what the report told us:

Last year was the best crop year we ever had. Total crop production reached an all-time high in 1960. It was 3 percent above the previous high set in 1958.

The season was not without its problems. The acreage harvested was about 1 percent below 1959. But good yields per acre for a majority of the crops pushed total production up over the top.

The 1960 crop season got off to a slow, shaky start east of the Rocky Mountains. Fall seedings in the Central and Southern Plains were late and soils were dry. Then a prolonged period of persistent rainy weather hampered seeding. Bad fall weather also slowed seeding in areas east of the Mississippi River.

The usual winter storms occurred sooner than usual. Then a cool, wet spring in the South held fieldwork to a snail's pace until mid-April. Winter reluctantly retreated northward and delayed the planting pace 2 or more weeks than usual.

Floods hit in the Missouri and upper Mississippi River drainage basins. The Far West seemed to fare better although weather seemed to slap back with late frosts in some areas.

In the Northwest searing July heat and skimpy moisture set the pace for forest fires and prairie fires and forced maturity too rapidly for best results.

But nature did not continue its angry mood. The growing season turned favorable in many areas. In fact, very favorable in most of the Nation. It was early September, however, in some areas before crops could break away from a sluggish start and make rapid advancement. The corn crop was late and vulnerable to early frost. But the early frost never came. The harvest season was favorable not only for fall crops, but the spring crops as well. This enabled farmers to harvest most of their crops with a minimum of acreage or production loss.

We can size up crop production in terms of an index. In 1960 the crop production index was 122. This topped the previous record of 118 set in 1958. We also express yields in terms of an index covering 28 leading crops. The index for 1960 of 142.7 was just under the record of 143.1 set in 1958.

About ten crops had record yields per acre in 1960. Corn, sorghum grain, peanuts, tobacco, rice, and hay were among them. A half dozen crops just barely missed producing record yields. Among them were wheat, oats, soybeans, barley, dry beans, and potatoes.

These crops are the heavyweights of American agriculture and accounted for about 90 percent of the total acreage harvested in 1960. Producing at record or nearly record levels, they pushed total output in 1960 to the top.

Food grain production was a fifth above 1959, yet 5 percent below the record outturn in 1958. Wheat racked up the second largest volume of record. Rye production was impressive, but buckwheat was down from last year.

The "big four" feed grain crops—corn, sorghum grain, barley, and oats—

1960 Crop—Continued

set a record in 1960, 3 percent above the previous record set in 1959. Good fall weather enabled corn to cross the finish line with both record production and yield per acre. Sorghum grain, now a major feed crop, turned in a record performance. Oats and barley made poorer showings, but were somewhat larger than they were in 1959.

Soybean production—the second highest of record—was 5 percent higher than in 1959. The cotton crop was just under 1959 as lower yields per acre more than offset a slightly larger acreage. Both peanuts and flaxseed made impressive showings in 1960.

Dry bean production was smaller than in 1959. Dry peas were down a third. Tobacco production was the largest since 1956—the tobacco yield set a record. Popcorn was up 15 percent from 1959. Broomcorn production was down a third. Sugar beet production was under 1959 as lower yields per acre more than offset increased acreage. Sugarcane production was about the same as in 1959.

Conditions were good for seed crop production in 1960. The total output of seed crops was 2 percent below 1959, and 12 percent under the 1949–58 average. Kentucky bluegrass was the star performer in 1960 and jumped up sharply from 1959's drought-depressed level.

Production of non-citrus fruits and edible nuts fell 8 percent below 1959, but was still above the 1949–58 average. Fresh market vegetable and melon production was 6 percent higher.

Farmers planted something like 329 million acres in 1960, 6 million fewer than in 1959 and the smallest acreage in nearly 45 years. But they harvested 321 million acres, about the same as in 1958, but nearly 2 million fewer than they did in 1959. In the past 12 years the total crop acreage harvested has dropped over 30 million acres.

Perhaps it is appropriate to end this story by saying, "it will also be interesting to see what 1961 holds for us."

Charles E. Burkhead
Agricultural Estimates Division, AMS



Recent USDA Publications

Acreage Marketing Guides . . . what they mean to potato growers.
AMS 417. 4 pages.

This leaflet explains USDA's acreage-marketing guides for potatoes, and how they affect growers. Production planning is a vital problem for the potato industry. Without it, erratic production brings about drastic price changes which work against the potato grower.

The leaflet tells potato growers how the guides can help them with production planning. The guides provide growers with an analysis of the potato market. They let them know the volume of potatoes the market will need for each particular season and recommend acreage adjustments that can help the grower tailor his crop to fit the market.

Preparing Peaches for Market
MB 9. 21 pages.

Peach growers and packers will be interested in this marketing bulletin. It covers the preparation of peaches for market from orchard through packing house. Methods and equipment are discussed as they relate to picking, hauling, cleaning or defuzzing, grading, sizing, packaging, precooling or hydro-cooling, and storing the peaches. Inspection, as well as shipping, loading, and selling methods are also touched upon. Pictures help to give the reader a clear idea of the operations and facilities.

You may obtain a free copy of these publications by writing to the editor, Agricultural Situation, Marketing Information Division, AMS, USDA, Washington 25, D.C.

THE FARMER'S SHARE

The farmer's share of the consumer's food dollar was 39 cents in October, 1 cent higher than in September. In October 1959 it was 38 cents.

"Bert" Newell's Letter

I always read the columns in the newspapers and magazines on "how-to" for the handy man. They cover subjects like how to build a shelf, repairing home appliances, etc. Of course, some of them are pretty elementary. Recently, though, I have found that some of my friends don't seem to have the first idea about doing things a lot of us just grew up knowing.

For example, I noticed my neighbor trying to put a hinge on his garden gate. He had gotten to the "talking to himself stage" because he had twisted off two screws and bent over a nail trying to drive it into the post. It was an old seasoned locust post—hard as iron. Well now, I thought everyone would know about drilling the proper size hole and the trick of soaping the screw—but he didn't.

Then I tried to tell another friend how to put a washer on the faucet in the kitchen sink. When I found out he didn't know what the valve stem was and thought the washer was some sort of gadget used to clean up the valve, I gave up.

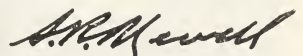
What we really need in this age of do-it-yourself is a book on "how-to" for the *unhandy* man. Wouldn't that be something to write. Take the faucet for example. You would have to describe the valve stem and then the little round disk, either rubber or fiber, called a washer. When you turn the faucet off with the handle, the washer is screwed down against a little bronze ring called the valve seat. If the valve seat is in bad shape, you'll have to get a valve seat reamer and that is a . . . oh heck, call the plumber.

Now we run into do-it-yourselfers in agricultural estimating too. Some are pretty good, but every once in a while one turns up who creates about as many sparks as the fellow did who forgot to turn off the power before wiring in a new switch.

A few years ago, some folks came in to see us about making a survey. They said it was all as simple as dirt. All you had to do was to put 3 or 4 questions on a post card, send them to a list of growers, then when they came back add them up and boom that was it. They tried it, and it boomed alright. The results were so screwy that they knew something was dead wrong, so they asked us to analyze the returns. We tried, but we found that the questions were not clear and they had about as many different answers as they had reporters. Furthermore, the list they had used was too restricted and the returns too small to even get a representation of the list.

Now, I don't want you folks to have the same kind of difficulty, so here are a few suggestions if you decide that you want to make a survey. First, decide exactly what you want to get. Next, analyze the whole universe and figure out how to get a good sample or cross section. Then build up a list of possible respondents. Then be sure you have a good questionnaire and that you have asked the questions in a way that people will understand what you want. Of course, all of this has to be done before you actually start out on your survey. Then there is the matter of training the enumerators . . . oh shucks, the best thing to do if you don't already know all of the pitfalls and problems is to call an expert or go talk to your State statistician. He has quite a few books on how to make and analyze sample surveys. I am sure he would be happy to let you look them over, but, of course, it may require several years of study before you can understand what's in those books. Your State statistician had to put in long hours of study and besides he has had 15 or 20 years of practice.

No, I guess it would be a lot easier to write a description on "how to wire a 3-way switch for the unhandy man" than it would be to tell a person equally unhandy in the matter of statistics how to make and analyze a sample survey. It's a lot more complicated than you might think at first.



S. R. Newell
Chairman, Crop Reporting Board, AMS



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Growth Through Agricultural Progress

January 1961

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